



City Neighborhood Council

c/o 700 Fifth Ave, Suite 1700, PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Telephone: (206) 684-0719 Fax: (206) 233-5142 TDD: (206) 684-0446

DISTRICT COUNCILS:

- Ballard
- Central
- Delridge Neighborhoods
- Downtown
- East
- Greater Duwamish
- Lake Union
- Magnolia/Queen Anne
- North
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Southeast
- Southwest

May 22, 2006

RE: OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVED CITIZEN ACCESS TO BUDGET INFORMATION

Dear Mayor Nickels:

The City Neighborhood Council and the thirteen District Councils have appreciated our partnership with the executive branch and City Council in producing the Citizens Budget Conference and other activities to engage the public in early and constructive dialogue with public officials about the biennial budget. Below are some suggestions on opportunities to provide to citizens the information about the budget they need to participate effectively and in a timely way.

1. CNC requests that the Mayor and City Council take steps now to improve citizen access to the budget proposals and analyses that arise in October and November. Once the Mayor has conveyed the proposed budget to the Council in late September, a hectic two months ensue in which the agencies provide written answers to Council questions, Councilmembers make proposals, and Council staff analyze the Mayor's and Councilmember proposals. It has been difficult for the public to obtain these proposals and analyses - or even learn of their existence. We request that the Council post member and staff proposals and analyses on the Council web site in a timely way, preferably simultaneously with their creation. We also suggest that the web sites of the Department of Finance or other departments include the executive responses to the Council queries, and any later executive proposals that differ from those in the Mayor's proposed budget.
2. CNC is also concerned that in the past year the quarterly adjustments in the budget were made with little or no outreach to the public. The good outreach efforts that the Mayor and Council make annually in formulating the budget are too valuable not to be repeated when the budget is changed in subsequent quarters.
3. Resolution 27709, which in 1987 created the City Neighborhood Council and the District Councils, included in its Attachment A the following implementing language: "The City shall provide budget information by district and, if practical, by neighborhood." CNC finds that, nearly twenty years later, it is difficult for District Councils and neighborhoods to track those parts of the

proposed or adopted budget that can reasonably be identified as being spent in different districts and neighborhoods. In some cases, departments already have breakdowns of budgetary information by district or a similar boundary, and simply need to make this information available to the public. We request that the Mayor and City Council work to improve the extent to which budget information is broken out by the boundaries of District Councils and neighborhoods.

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We look forward to working with you toward these and other improvements in citizen access to information on the budget process.

Respectfully,

Pete Spalding
Chair, City Neighborhood Council

Cheryl Klinker
Chair, CNC budget committee